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## DOCUMENTS

### THE APPEAL OF THE AMERICAN CONVENTION OF ABOLITION SOCIETIES

The student of the so-called Negro problem of today may find it profitable to study the methods of persons thus concerned more than a century ago. What their plans were, what machinery they constructed for carrying them out, and the hopes they had for ultimate success, will furnish much material for reflection for social workers. There is published below, therefore, a number of the annual appeals of the American Convention of Abolition Societies to the various branches, setting forth the annual review of the work, the general survey of results obtained and the ways and means to carry it forward to a successful completion.

#### TO THE ANTISLAVERY GROUPS

*To the*

*Society for*

*promoting the abolition of Slavery, &c.*

It is with peculiar pleasure we inform you, that the Convention of Delegates, from most of the Abolition Societies formed in the United States, met in this city, have, with much unanimity, gone through the business which came before them. The advantages to be derived from this meeting are so evident, that we have agreed earnestly to recommend to you, that a similar meeting be annually convened, until the great object of our association—the liberty of our fellowmen—shall be fully and equivocally established.

To obtain this important end, we conceive that it is proper, constantly to have in view the necessity of using our utmost and unremitting endeavors to abolish slavery, and to protect and meliorate the condition of the enslaved, and of the enslaved, and of the emancipated. The irresistible, though silent progress of the principles of true philosophy, will do much for us; but, placed in a situation well adapted to promote these principles, it surely becomes us to improve every occasion of forwarding the great designs

of our institutions. For this purpose, we think it proper to request you to unite with us, in the most strenuous exertions, to effect a compliance with the laws in favour of emancipation; and, where these laws are deficient, respectful applications to the State-Legislatures should not be discontinued, however unsuccessful they may prove.—Let us remember, for our consolation and encouragement in these cases, that, although interest and prejudice may oppose, yet the fundamental principles of our government, as well as the progressive and rapid influence of reason and religion, are in our favour—and let us never be discouraged by a fear of the event, from performing any task of duty, when clearly pointed out; for it is an undoubted truth—that no good effort can ever be entirely lost.

While contemplating the great principles of our associations, we cannot refrain from recommending to your attention the propriety of using your endeavours to form, as circumstances may require, Abolition Societies in your own, and in the neighboring States; as, for want of the concurrence of others, the good intentions and efforts of many an honest and zealous individual are often defeated.

But, while we wish to draw your attention to these objects, there is another which we cannot pass over. We are all too much accustomed to the reproaches of the enemies of our cause, on the subject of the ignorance and crimes of the Blacks, not to wish that they were ill-founded. And though, to us, it is sufficiently apparent that this ignorance, and these crimes, are owing to the degrading state of slavery; yet, may we not, with confidence, attempt to do away the reproach?—Let us use our endeavours to have the children of the emancipated, and even of the enslaved Africans, instructed in common literature—in the principles of virtue and religion, and in those mechanic arts which will keep them most constantly employed, and, of course, will less subject them to idleness and debauchery; and thus prepare them for becoming good citizens of the United States: a privilege and elevation to which we look forward with pleasure, and which we believe can be best merited by habits of industry and virtue.

We shall transmit you an exact copy of our proceedings, with the different memorials and addresses which to us have appeared necessary at this time; and would recommend to you the propriety of giving full powers to the Delegates who are to meet in the year 1795; believing that the business of that Convention will be rendered more

easy and more extensively useful, if you send, by your Representatives, certified copies of the constitution and laws of your *Society*, and of all the laws existing in your state concerning slavery, with such facts relative to this business, as may ascertain the respective situation of slavery, and of the Blacks in general.

*To the*

*Society for  
promoting the abolition of slavery, &c.*

The Delegates, from the several Abolition Societies in the United States, convened in this city, express to you, with great satisfaction, the pleasure they have experienced from the punctual attendance of the persons, delegated to this Convention, and that harmony with which they have deliberated on the several matters that have been presented to them, at this time, for their consideration. The benefits which may flow from a continuance of this general meeting, by aiding the principal design of its institution—the universal emancipation of the wretched Africans who are yet in bondage, appear to us so many and important, that we are induced to recommend to you, to send Delegates to a similar Convention, which we propose to be holden, in this city, on the first day of January, in the year one thousand, seven hundred and ninety-six.

We have thought it proper to request your further attention to that part of the address of the former Convention, which relates to the procurement of certified copies of the laws of your state respecting slavery; and that you would send, to the next Convention, exact copies of all such laws as are now in force, and of such as have been repealed. Convinced that an historical review of the various acts and provisions of the Legislatures of the several states, relating to slavery, from the periods of their respective settlements to the present time, by tracing the progress of the system to African slavery in this country, and its successive change in the different governments of the Union, would throw much light on the objects of our enquiry and attention, and enable us to determine, how far the cause of justice and humanity has advanced among us, and how soon we may reasonably expect to see it triumphant;—we recommend to you, to take such measures as you may think conducive to that purpose, for procuring materials for the work now proposed, and assisting its publication; and to communicate, to the ensuing

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1794, pp. 18–21.

Convention, what progress you shall have made toward perfecting the plan here offered for your consideration and care.

Believing that an acquaintance with the names of the officers of the several Abolition Societies, would facilitate that friendly correspondence which ought always to be preserved between our various associations, we request that you would send, to the next, and to every future Convention, an accurate list of all the officers of your Society, for the time being, with the number of members of which it consists. And it would assist that Convention in ascertaining the existing state of slavery in the United States, if you were to forward to them an exact account of the persons who have been liberated by the agency of your Society, and of those who may be considered as signal instances of the relief that you have afforded; and, also, a statement of the number of free blacks in your state, their property, employments, and moral conduct.

As a knowledge of what has been done, and of that success which has attended the efforts of humanity, will cherish the hope of benevolence, and stimulate to further exertion, we trust that you will be of opinion with us, that it would be highly useful to procure correct reports of all such trials, and decisions of courts of judicature, respecting slavery, a knowledge of which may be subservient to the cause of abolition, and to transmit them to the next, or to any future Convention.

It cannot have escaped your observation, how many persons there are who continue the hateful practice of enslaving their fellow men, and who acquiesce in the sophistry of the advocates of that practice, merely from want of reflection, and from an habitual attention to their own immediate interest. If to such were often applied the force of reason, and the persuasion of eloquence, they might be awakened to a sense of their injustice, and be startled with horror at the enormity of their conduct. To produce so desirable a change in sentiment, as well as practice, we recommend to you the instituting of annual, or other periodical, discourses, or orations, to be delivered in public, on the subject of slavery, and means of its abolition.

We cannot forbear expressing to you our earnest desire, that you will continue, without ceasing, to endeavour, by every method in your power which can promise any success, to procure, either an absolute repeal of all the laws in your state, which countenance slavery, or such an amelioration of them as will gradually produce

an entire abolition. Yet, even should that greater end be happily attained, it cannot put a period to the necessity of further labor. The education of the emancipated, the noblest and most arduous task which we have to perform, will require all our wisdom and virtue, and the constant exercise of the greatest skill and discretion. When we have broken his chains, and restored the African to the enjoyment of his rights, the great work of justice and benevolence is not accomplished—The new born citizen must receive that instruction, and those powerful impressions of moral and religious truth, which will render him capable and desirous of fulfilling the various duties he owes to himself and to his country. By educating some in the higher branches of science, and all in the useful parts of learning, and in the precepts of religion and morality, we shall not only do away with the reproach and calumny so unjustly lavished upon us, but confound the enemies of truth, by evincing that the unhappy sons of Africa, in spite of the degrading influence of slavery, are in no wise inferior to the more fortunate inhabitants of Europe and America.

As a mean of effectuating, in some degree, a design so virtuous and laudable, we recommend to you to appoint a committee, annually, or for any other more convenient period, to execute such plans, for the improvement of the condition and moral character of the free blacks in your state, as you may think best adapted to your particular situation.

By a decree of the National Convention of France, all the blacks and people of color, within the territories of the French republic, are declared free, and entitled to an equal participation of the rights of citizens of France. We have been informed that many persons, of the above description, notwithstanding the decree in their favor, have been brought from the West-India islands, by emigrants, into the United States, and are now held as slaves,—We suggest to you the propriety, as well as the necessity, of making enquiry into the subject, and of effecting their liberation, so far as may be found consistent with the laws of your state.<sup>2</sup>

*To the* *Society for promoting*  
*the Abolition of Slavery, &c.*

The Delegates from the several Abolition Societies in the United States inform you, that, agreeably to the recommendation of the

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1795, pp. 26–31.

Convention of last year, they met in this city on the first instant, and have, with much harmony and satisfaction, gone through the business which came before them. They have the pleasure to assure you, that every successive meeting evinces the importance of that union and concert which are so happily established among the several Societies, in pursuing the great object of their association.

But, although the exertions of this delegated Body have been hitherto attended, as we hope, with considerable success—Although we are persuaded that no small progress may be marked in the great business of emancipation; yet much remains to be done; as long as *seven hundred thousand* of our Fellow Creatures, in the United States, continue in a state of bondage, there appears a pressing necessity for the continuance of our efforts; that we should keep our attention fixed upon the subject, and stand ready to improve every favorable opportunity that may occur, to forward the interesting cause in which we are engaged. We are therefore induced to continue the recommendation heretofore made, that a similar meeting be annually held; and as convening at the present season is attended with inconveniences, we propose, that the next Convention, should assemble in this city, on the first Wednesday of May, in the year 1797.

It gives us pleasure to learn, from various reports which were laid before us, that most of the recommendations made by the former Conventions, had received a considerable degree of attention, from the several societies to whom they were addressed. But, as they have not been uniformly and perfectly complied with, permit us to repeat the request, *so far as the same may be applicable to your society*, that you transmit to the next Convention, certified copies of all such laws, in any wise respecting slavery, as are now in force, as have been repealed, or may hereafter be enacted—Correct lists of the officers of your society, for the time being, and also the names of all your members, and their places of abode—An account of the proceedings of your society, in relieving Africans and others unlawfully held in bondage—A statement of the condition of the blacks, both bond and free, in your state, with respect to the property of the free, and the employment and moral conduct of all—Reports of such trials and decisions of the Courts of Judicature, relative to Africans, as may have taken place—An account of the endeavors which have been used to obtain a repeal or amelioration of the laws respecting slavery—information con-

cerning what has been done, in pursuance of the recommendation of the last Convention, to establish periodical discourses on the subject of slavery, and the means of its abolition—And finally, a report of the progress you have made in extending to Africans the benefits of education. And we further request, that whatever communications may be made to the next, or to any future Convention, in consequence of the above recommendations, be presented in the form of regular written reports, noticing in what manner and degree you have carried them into effect, and how far your efforts have been ineffectual. By this means there will be exhibited such a view of the state of each Society, as that the several reports may be entered on the minutes of the Convention, who will thereby be better enabled to decide on the propriety of making public such parts of these communications as may be best adapted to advance the cause of truth and humanity.

And as very important advantages have, in several instances, resulted from accurate registers being kept, by persons appointed for that purpose by certain of the Abolition Societies in the United States, of such manumissions as have taken place; we do earnestly recommend, should you not already have entered into this regulation, that you make it hereafter an object of diligent attention. Such records may, in various ways, subserve the cause of emancipation.

We learn, that the proposal made by the last Convention, respecting the blacks, and people of color, who have emigrated from the West Indies, and now reside in the United States, has, in many instances, given rise to difficulty; in order to remove which, we have been induced to transmit to you the following extract from the twelfth article of the Consular Convention between France and the United States; which by designating the proper tribunals to whom application, in such cases, is to be made, will, we trust, be found sufficient, in future, to direct your proceedings in this business, *viz.*

“That all differences and suits between  
 “French citizens in the United States, and  
 “between American citizens in the domi-  
 “nions of France, shall be determined by  
 “the respective Consuls and Vice Consuls  
 “either by a reference to arbitrators, or by  
 “a summary judgment, and without costs;  
 “and that no officer of the country, civil  
 “or military, shall interfere therein, or take  
 “any part whatever in the matter.”



When we contemplate the odious nature and the immense magnitude of the evil which you have associated to oppose, and the inestimable importance of the objects which you are seeking to obtain, we cannot forbear to urge unremitted exertions, in pursuing the great ends before you. We are persuaded you will not neglect any just means in your power, which may tend to advance, either directly, or indirectly, the cause of equal liberty;—And it gives us pleasure also to express our persuasion, that, in this pursuit, much is still in your power. Although you cannot control Legislatures; and though, when you plead the cause of humanity, they will not, at all times, listen to you; yet there are other means to be used, perhaps, more effectual—You can do much, by directing your efforts to the conviction of individuals—by diffusing proper publications amongst them, and by presenting the evils of slavery in various forms to their minds.<sup>3</sup>

*The following was inserted in the Address to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society.*

And as precise information, on this subject, cannot be too generally diffused, we request you to collect all possible intelligence relative to such blacks and people of color in the United States as are made Citizens of the French Republic, by the decree of the National Convention, of the sixteenth Pluviose, second year of the republic, and transmit the same to all the other Abolition Societies in the United States.

Nor can we suppose, it would be an effort altogether ineffectual in favor of liberty, were its friends, throughout the United States, in all cases where it is practicable, to display a marked preference of such commodities, as are of the culture or manufacture of freemen, to those which are cultivated or manufactured by slaves—In this way, every individual may discountenance oppression, and bear testimony against a practice, which is still suffered to remain the disgrace of our land.

We have thought proper to address the free Africans and other free people of color in the United States, on various subjects, which we believe nearly to concern their interest and happiness. We have directed copies of this address to be transmitted to you and request you to distribute the same, in your State, in such manner as you may judge best calculated to promote its design.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1796, pp. 23–25.

We cannot conclude, without calling your attention, in a particular manner, to the necessity of appointing such of your members to represent you in the Convention, as will be punctually attentive to the duties of their appointment. We are sorry to observe, that there is some ground of complaint, on this subject; but we trust, that, in future, such a full representation will appear, as will give encreasing encouragement, energy and success to our united endeavors in the great cause of human happiness.

Copies of our proceedings will be laid before you; from which we hope, you will derive satisfaction, and perceive the importance of the several objects which we have recommended to your attention.<sup>4</sup>

*To the*

*Society for promoting the  
Abolition of Slavery.*

To inform you of our proceedings; to solicit your further advice and assistance; and to request your special attention to the original object of our meetings, we now address you.

We have, as formerly, gone through our business with harmony and satisfaction; the peculiar objects, thereof will appear from our minutes, herewith transmitted; and we can truly add, that the important advantages evidently arising from such a collection of information and exchange of sentiment are too obvious, not to unite us in the recommendation, that a similar Convention of delegates from the different abolition societies, be held in this city on the first day of June, 1798.

The non-compliance of several societies with this proposal for some years past, induces us to believe that some obstacles may exist, which possibly might be removed; we therefore request, that where it is not agreed to send delegates, such societies would favor the Convention, in writing, with their determination and the causes of it. This better enables the Convention to judge of the most proper mode of proceeding in future.

A table, containing the requisitions of this and the former Conventions, and how far they have hitherto been complied with by each society, will shew the propriety and necessity of fulfilling these requisitions; which, after being thus pointed out need not now be further insisted on.

When we consider the extensive influence of education on so-

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1796, p. 28.

ciety, we think a due attention to the instruction of the blacks and people of color of every description cannot be too forcibly impressed. This will apply not merely to what is called school learning, but essentially consists in inculcating the sound principles of morality and religion as well as habits of temperance and industry. From a continued regard to the welfare of this much injured and much oppressed people, we have again addressed them on such points as we judged would be most beneficial; but it will in a great degree rest with you to circulate and enforce the advice recommended: and we may add, that, as the evils which must necessarily result from their being retained in a state of ignorance are incalculable, so it is, in our opinion, the greatest and perhaps the only important service we can render to them and to our country, to disseminate learning and morality amongst them, thus raising them gradually and safely to that level, to which they must, in the course of time, inevitably attain.

The different Conventions have from year to year, endeavoured to procure from the Abolition Societies, every kind of information which may illustrate the history of slavery in the United States; we now repeat their request, with a view to the formation of a history of this important subject.

From the general accounts received, as well as from our own observations we are induced strongly to recommend, that where several Abolition Societies exist in one state, they would, if possible, form a general plan of union or confederation, so as, on all important occasions, to act in concert.

You are already well informed of the act of Congress of March twenty-second, 1794, prohibiting the citizens of the United States from supplying foreign nations with slaves; you will also most probably have heard that this wise and humane law has been too frequently violated by our citizens; in consequence of which the Abolition Societies of Pennsylvania, New-York and Providence, have severally commenced prosecutions against divers persons and vessels, engaged in this abominable traffic; the first named society has been successful in the two prosecutions they undertook in the District Court of Pennsylvania and of the United States of America. The vessels have been condemned, and actions are pending against the masters and owners in the Circuit Court of the United States in and for the Pennsylvania district of the middle circuit. There is good ground to believe that the other societies will meet with equal success.

Besides the information mutually given by the societies to each other as occasions may require, to assist them in checking such clandestine practices, we believe it would be highly useful to forward every particular that comes to your knowledge on this subject, to the next Convention, who may make a very important use of it.

The difficulties which have continually occurred respecting the blacks and people of color, who have for several years past emigrated from the French West-Indies into the United States, have engaged the attention of this and the preceding Conventions. To remove these difficulties, we transmit you a certified copy of an authenticated decree of the National Convention of France, of the sixteenth Pluviose, second year of the Republic; (February fifth, 1794,) which has been lately received by the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. With this decree, since fully confirmed by the French constitution of 1795, we believe you will have it in your power to afford every legal and effectual assistance to these unfortunate people.

There yet remains a subject which, though often urged, still continues to demand our serious attention; we allude to the most proper means of extending the principles of just and equal liberty amongst mankind: and as we profess to assume no other powers than those of persuasion and conviction, founded on the unerring basis of truth and justice, we wish you duly to advert to the magnitude of the cause in which we are engaged, to persevere with patience and fortitude in your applications to legislative bodies and courts of justice, for the relief of our unfortunate African brethren, and to continue to enlighten the public mind, by spreading as much as possible, all kind of useful information on the subject: that thus we may, in every form, and on every occasion, be ready to plead the cause of the oppressed, in the language of persuasion and of truth. And then we shall have done our duty; and then we may, in humble confidence, look up for the blessing and protection of the great Father of all, *whose ways are just and equal, and who hath made of one blood all nations of men.*<sup>5</sup>

To the

*Society for promoting the  
Abolition of Slavery, &c.*

THE Convention of delegates from the Abolition Societies established in different parts of the United States, assembled at

<sup>5</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1797, pp. 22-25.

Philadelphia, congratulate their constituents on the general progress of their objects since last meeting, and on the union of sentiment, and harmony of deliberation, which has prevailed in all their proceedings.

The assembling in Convention, at proper intervals, has produced so many advantages in combining the views and operations of the friends of emancipation throughout the United States, that we are persuaded you will unite with us in opinion, that it is expedient that another Convention of delegates from the several Abolition Societies, be held in this city on the first Wednesday of June, in the year one thousand eight hundred.

The alteration in the period of meeting we have adopted under a consideration of the peculiar situation of our country, and the state of the objects which have hitherto occupied our attention; but, we earnestly request, that a general representation, and a punctual attendance, may take place at the time recommended.

Although, from the reports of such of the Societies as have sent delegates to this Convention, we have observed, with encouragement and pleasure, the perseverance that is used, and the progress that is made, in the great work for which we have associated; yet, we cannot help noticing, with regret, the absence of many of our members, and the total omission of several of the Societies to appoint Representatives, or to comply with the request of the last Convention, that, where it was not agreed to send delegates, such determination and the cause of it might be reported to the Convention in writing. To those societies, therefore, which have failed in this respect, we are induced earnestly to repeat the request, and to urge their particular attention thereto.

By some of the Societies the general requisitions of former Conventions, have not yet been answered or complied with, and by others only in part. An accurate table of these requisitions, and the manner in which each Society had complied with them, was made out by the last Convention and forwarded to the different Abolition Societies. By a reference thereto, and to the report of the committee of this Convention, to whom the several communications were referred, which is included in the copy of our proceedings herewith transmitted to you, you will observe what yet remains to be done; and we hope you will be able to make complete returns to the succeeding Convention, together with such other information as may appear to you to be useful towards the important purpose

of forming a history of the progress and state of slavery in the United States.

Too much cannot be said on the necessity of a constant attention to the subject of education. To prepare the minds of our unfortunate African brethren for that condition of freedom and rank in society to which they must, sooner or later, arrive—to disseminate among them useful instruction on moral and religious subjects, and to use our utmost endeavours to have schools established, for the purpose of teaching them to read and write, ought, we conceive, to be the primary object of all the Abolition Societies. We also think it of importance, at this particular period, to impress upon the minds of those who are in bondage, the propriety of a quiet submission to the injunctions of their masters, assuring them that by such conduct they will be likely to experience not only the advantages of better treatment in their present situation, but also cause, perhaps, even their possessors to perceive the injustice that is attached to the principles of slavery.

Firmly persuaded that considerable benefit has already resulted from inculcating friendly advice to this oppressed people, and believing that the sentiments contained in the addresses of the former Conventions to the free blacks and other people of color in the United States cannot be too frequently repeated and enforced, we recommend to the consideration of the Societies, the propriety of a republication of those addresses by each society, and such communication and distribution thereof as may be best calculated to promote a beneficial effect.

The Convention having been informed, that vessels are fitted out with cargoes for certain of the West Indian Islands, parts of which cargoes are their disposed of, and, with the proceeds, slaves are purchased and carried to other of the said Islands, and sold; also that other vessels are loaded with rum, for certain ports in Africa, with the proceeds of which, we have reason to believe, the natives are purchased and afterwards conveyed and sold as slaves in the West Indies. We recommend a strict enquiry to be made into the conduct of persons thus offending against the dictates of humanity and the honor and interest of our country, that proper measures, to punish and prevent such nefarious and disgraceful practices, may be adopted.

We have thought it expedient to confine our attention at present, principally to carrying into effect the measures heretofore advised. Let us, however, whilst prudent and cautious, continue to be

firm and sincere. Let us embrace every opportunity which may offer for ameliorating the condition of slaves so far as the laws, under which we severally act, will permit us to proceed. Let us do nothing which may justly draw forth the censure of our country, but act, in all things, with that moderation and propriety which have heretofore distinguished the Abolition Societies.

We confidently trust, that when the storms, by which the world is at present agitated, shall have subsided, the light of truth will break through the dark gloom of oppression—cruelty and injustice will not only hear, but obey, the voice of reason and religion; and in these United States the practice of the people will be conformable to their declaration—“That all men are born equally free, and have an unalienable right to Liberty.”<sup>6</sup>

*To*

*Society, &c.*

The Convention of delegates, from the different Abolition Societies established in the United States, feel a pleasure in informing you, that their deliberations have been conducted with much harmony and satisfaction to themselves.

They, however, deeply regret, that so few of the Societies have been induced to send Representatives to the Convention.

The great and good work of restoring liberty to the captive, and fitting him to fill that station in the scale of being, from which he has been forced by the domineering spirit of power and usurpation, may be considered as little more than begun. How many thousands of miserable wretches yet languish in slavery, in these United States, to whom the light of morn, which should awaken all nature alike to harmony and joy, affords, perhaps, no other consolation save the solitary certainty, that one day more is taken from the long period of their sufferings—This is not all—In vain do you liberate the Africans, while you neglect to furnish him with the means of properly providing for himself, and of becoming an useful member of the community. This subject alone opens an extensive field for active benevolence, and justly demands the exercise of a large portion of the talents and labours of the friends of emancipation.

To effect these desirable objects, so importunately called for by every sentiment of a feeling heart, union and concentration of

<sup>6</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1798, pp. 15–20.

energy appear to be indispensable. The societies should never be found in the pursuit of incongruous measures, but act in concert; and this cannot, perhaps be better accomplished than by a free and liberal interchange of information, whence useful knowledge should diverge to each society, communicating life, energy, and consistency to the whole.

The advantages resulting from this institution may be known by past experience; but as an additional instance of the good effects flowing from it, we refer you to the addresses forwarded this year to the Convention, and printed in the minutes; in which you will perceive, and especially in the one from New York, much valuable matter. That society mentions a species of kidnapping, which to the disgrace of humanity, has been carried on in that city in a manner at once evincing the barefaced hardness of its perpetrators, and the wicked and cunning arts practiced, by the enemies of freedom, on an oppressed people. There is good reason to believe, that similar practices are secretly pursued in other parts of the Union. We therefore earnestly press your vigilant attention to the subject, in order that if any other persons should be engaged in this nefarious traffic, they may be made to suffer that exposure and punishment which the enormity of the crime so richly merits.

Fully impressed with the magnitude of the object, and the benefits to be derived from it, we cannot forbear strongly to recommend, that another Convention be held in this city on the first Wednesday in June, in the year 1801. And, in order to insure permanency, and its consequent advantages to this establishment, we submit to your consideration, the expediency of delegating to your Representatives, the power of aiding in the formation of a Constitution, for the government of future Conventions.

The case mentioned by the Virginia society, held at Richmond, from which it seems evident that a small sum of money, beyond what their funds are calculated to bear, might restore a considerable number of persons to liberty, who were unlawfully taken from their state into Georgia, and there sold as slaves, has called forth the sympathy of this Convention; and forcibly suggests the propriety of enabling the next Convention, by the voluntary contributions of the different societies, to grant some pecuniary aid to similar and other proper objects. Much good might be done in this way; and perhaps some societies, who are capable, may be found willing promptly to bestow a portion of their funds to the



Virginia society, to enable them more effectually to prosecute this particular claim, it is also to be presumed, that some of the Societies, especially in the eastern states, where slavery no longer exists, might render their benevolent exertions more extensively useful, by suitable and timely grants to others, who are less wealthy, and have much to do.

You have embarked in an excellent cause—go on and prosper,—until liberty, like the light of Heaven, or the air we breathe, shall, however, men may be diversified by color, shape of habit, become the equal inheritance of all.<sup>7</sup>

*To the*

*Society for promoting  
the Abolition of Slavery.*

THE seventh Convention of Delegates from the several Abolition Societies in the United States, now address you on the subject of their appointment. The concord and reciprocity of sentiment which have attended our proceedings will, we trust, have a happy influence on the cause in which we are engaged, and aid in advancing the great interests of humanity and freedom.

The work which we have undertaken is not a light and trivial nature. It is, on the contrary, one of the utmost magnitude and importance. To remove the foul blot which now stains our country, to break the chains with which so many of our degraded fellow creatures are fettered, and to qualify them for the station for which a beneficent Creator designed them, are labours requiring the vigorous endeavours of every friend to mankind throughout the world. We, therefore, earnestly entreat that the cause may not be suffered to slumber in your hands, but that every favorable opportunity may be *eagerly* embraced of promoting the work of gradual emancipation.

The subject of the education of the blacks has claimed a share of our consideration. It is an object of so much interest that we cannot too often bring it to view. To adopt the language of the Convention of 1795, “when we have restored the African to the enjoyment of his rights, the great Work of justice and benevolence is not accomplished—The new born citizen must receive that instruction and those powerful impressions of moral and religious truth which will render him capable and desirous of fulfilling the various duties he owes to himself and to his country.”

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1800, pp. 20–23.

On this point we particularly refer you to the sentiments so forcibly expressed in the addresses of preceding conventions, and we strenuously urge a strict compliance with the recommendations therein contained.

The great increase of the practice of kidnapping in defiance of every principle of moral and legal obligation, induces us pressingly to recommend the most earnest endeavours to root out the enormous evil. In this instance there will be less to combat than on the general principle; the slave holders themselves being interested in preventing this addition to the many calamities inflicted on the unfortunate blacks.

With feelings of sorrow and regret, we learn that the horrid trade to Africa for slaves is still continued by many of our fellow citizens. The hearts of those who can contemplate this subject without emotion must indeed be destitute of every sentiment of tenderness. It seems scarcely possible that men accustomed to the enjoyment of liberty, and partaking of the blessings of a free government should so far disregard the rights of humanity as to engage in so diabolical a commerce. The fact however, incredible as it may seem, certainly exists and to a very alarming extent, particularly in the eastern states; we wish to arouse your zeal on the occasion and to incite your diligence and activity in carrying into rigorous execution the laws of the states and of the general government against such atrocious offenders.

The several Societies having expressed themselves favorable to the adoption of a constitution for the government of future conventions, we have made it a subject of our deliberations and being of opinion that the measure would be attended with considerable advantages we have agreed on a plan which we shall forward to you. The provisions of this instrument you will observe are of as general a nature as its objects would admit, and we hope it will prove acceptable to our constituents. If its present form should be approved you will be aware of the necessity of its speedy ratification. From the difficulty of framing a work of this kind, and accommodating it to the wishes and sentiments of every individual, it is hoped that verbal criticisms and alterations of an unimportant nature will be avoided; this point however, we submit to your prudent consideration and decision. Should you think proper to adopt it we request your aid in establishing the contemplated fund.

As numerous misrepresentations of the views of our institutions

have gone abroad, and as the unhappy attempt at insurrection on the part of some of the blacks in the southern states, has been called in aid of these misrepresentations by the enemies of liberty, and lessened the activity of some of its friends, we have judged it prudent to publish an address to our fellow citizens, copies whereof will be transmitted to you; you will observe from a perusal of its contents that its object is also to bear our testimony, and produce individual exertion against the abominable practice of kidnapping and the cruel trade to Africa, which, as before observed, still disgrace our country. We anticipate the satisfaction of your approval of this measure, and invite your assistance by every means in your power, in giving it general circulation.

We have had our attention drawn to a subject, believed by our predecessors to be of considerable importance to the work of emancipation; the project of forming a history of slavery in the United States. With a view of forwarding this design, we have appointed a committee to examine and arrange the various papers and documents heretofore received by the several Conventions; to prepare an analysis of their contents, and to report the same with such other information as they may be enabled to obtain, to the ensuing Convention. We request you to examine the minutes and addresses heretofore transmitted, for the purpose of ascertaining how far the requisitions of former Conventions have been complied with on your part, and if my information connected with the object in view remains to be afforded, a benefit will arise from its speedy communication to the committee, and if individuals friendly to the cause, be possessed of any important documents relating to this subject, the committee will no doubt make a proper use of any information with which they may be favored.<sup>8</sup>

*To the.....Society for Promoting the  
Abolition of Slavery.*

It is with lively satisfaction that the eighth Convention of Delegates from different Abolition Societies in the United States, embrace the opportunity of addressing you on the interesting cause, which thus continues to claim our persevering attention, the ultimate success whereof, will, we confidently hope, yield an ample reward for all our labours.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1801, pp. 42-46.

Various and important, in our opinion, are the benefits resulting from thus meeting in annual Conventions. For though we are not invested with legislative influence, yet the opportunity, by this means afforded, for a free interchange of sentiments and communion of feelings, gives energy to action and animation to those who, from multiplied difficulties, are almost ready to relinquish the pursuit.

We have with the united consent of our constituents, fully ratified the Constitution which was presented for your consideration, and have appointed officers for the ensuing year.

This organization of the body, will, we earnestly hope, induce your renewed attention to the nomination of Delegates to the next Convention, and we urge the necessity of your deputing those, whom you have reason to believe, may be willing to devote an adequate portion of their time and attention to a compliance with the objects of their appointment; we request also in an especial manner that you will not fail, regularly to forward written communications from your societies.

Several societies have instructed their representatives to pay certain sums towards the formation of a general fund, from which, if it continues to accumulate, as we hope, it will, much good may be expected to our common cause, particularly in furnishing aid to those societies who are deficient in pecuniary resources.

In the promotion of the laudable purposes to which this fund may be thus applied, we trust our friends in several of the Eastern States, whose domestic exertions have become almost unnecessary by the disappearance of slavery from amongst them, will feel a lively interest;—we, therefore, earnestly solicit their peculiar attention to the subject, persuaded they will feel, in a consciousness of having done well, and in a view of the useful result of their beneficence, an ample reward. We are aware of the varied difficulty and opposition that attend the interference of some societies in this benevolent undertaking. But we sincerely hope they may not be overcome by any discouragements, and we request that they may continue to meet at regular periods, to preserve the form of their association, embracing every opportunity that may occur for useful exertions.

As the general establishment of a legislative plan, for the gradual abolition of slavery throughout the United States, is a desideratum highly interesting to humanity, we cannot but press all those

societies which exist in states, where no such legal provisions are in force, to make every proper exertion, in promoting the enactment of a law to this effect.

Much has been said by former Conventions on the subject of schools, and the vast importance of cultivating the minds and the morals of the blacks; no doubt difficulties of various kinds arise in many places to the attainment of this essential point, yet the happy effects abundantly conspicuous in divers neighbourhoods, on a persevering attention to this object, furnish great encouragement to unrelaxed exertion, and we sincerely hope that you may not diminish in zeal, for the promotion of this benevolent, this consistent work. We learn with particular pleasure, that the state of Schools for the African race, is, in several places, flourishing and progressive; and that in others, much good has been done therein, by the laudable and disinterested demand the acknowledgment of our unfeigned approbation.

We perceive, with emotions of horror and regret, that the diabolical practice of kidnapping, notwithstanding the vigilance of societies and recommendations of former Conventions, prevails in many places to a lamentable extent. We are also informed that a new species of this wicked outrage on the feelings of humanity is pursued by the prepetrators taking advantage of the provisions of the fugitive act to lay unfounded claims on the blacks and thus, under colour of the law, to drag them into slavery. We recommend you to urge every suitable means to procure such modifications of your laws as they may need to fit them for holding out efficient and prompt restraints against those wicked proceedings, and for bringing the offenders to exemplary punishment.

We are informed by the reports from New-Jersey, that a new society has been established at Trenton, forming a constituent branch of the general society of that state. This has afforded us peculiar satisfaction; it promises to be materially useful to the cause, and we recommend the example as worthy of your special notice, and so far as you deem it practicable of your example.

In one of the societies from which we have had communications, a standing committee has been appointed, who are charged with the selection and publication of such extracts, essays and fugitive pieces relative to slavery, as they apprehend may give currency to the subject and revive in the minds of our fellow citizens, from time to time a few reflections on the condition of those who still wear the

galling chains, deprived of one of the dearest privileges of our nature. We highly approve of this mode of circulating a knowledge of the subject, and recommend it to the imitation of all, who are not in a similar practice.

The committee appointed by the last Constitution to arrange the papers and documents relative to the formation of a history of slavery in the United States, and to produce an analysis of their contents, produced a report, from which we have judged it right to nominate three of our members in Philadelphia to engage some suitable literary character to undertake the work, and to have it published under the care, and superintendence of the committee; should you be in possession of any documents or other important information on the subject, we request you will forward them free of expense and with all convenient dispatch to the said committee, in order that they may be used as circumstances may render necessary.

The circuitous trade to Africa we have reason to believe, still continues to be carried on, particularly from many ports in the Eastern States, and although several of the attempts which have been made to punish infractions of the laws of the United States on this subject, have not resulted in the wished for event, nevertheless, we invite your vigilant and persevering opposition to this disgraceful traffic, and attention to the discovery and prosecution of the offenders, and we are willing to hope that though a partial perversion of the public sentiment, and the cupidity of interested individuals, may for a time, present considerable discouragement, yet that the virtuous exertions of the friends of the human race, will at last be blessed with the merited success.

To conclude, fellow labourers, we believe the magnitude of the work in which we are engaged is by no means lessened, and that the alarming and direful consequences attendant in various quarters, on this unchristian and inhuman usurpation of power, call for our united vigilance, and redoubled exertions, in contributing our share towards the eradication of this evil so portentous to our land.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1803, pp. 29-34.

*To the.....Society for Promoting the  
Abolition of Slavery.*

WE have received, with cordial satisfaction, the addresses to this Convention from the societies in New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware.

This interchange of opinion and information, between the Convention and its constituents, is as the vital current of the body, flowing from part to part, and communicating genial warmth, and health, and vigour, to every portion of the system.

Our satisfaction would have been much increased, could we have acknowledged the receipt of communications and delegations from several societies which were represented in former Conventions, but from whom we have now to direct intelligence; and had some of the addresses which have now no direct intelligence contained more detailed information.

Impressed with a sense of the interesting nature of the subject, we cannot but call your renewed attention to the education of the blacks. The schools are represented as being, in some parts, in a flourishing condition; while in others it is to be feared, little or nothing has been done towards their establishment and support. We recommend to such societies as have it not in their power, from the scantiness of their funds and other circumstances, to employ regular tutors, to form associations of their members, or other well disposed individuals, to instruct the people of colour in the most simple and useful branches of education; especially on the first day of the week—a day too often devoted to dissipation. It is also of importance that their religious and moral education should keep pace with their knowledge of letters, or much permanent good will not be accomplished. They should be taught to fear and venerate the Deity; to respect the laws of the country, and in all things to act as becomes men escaped from bondage, and on whose good conduct must, in some measure, depend the liberation of their brethren, and the kind of treatment of such as remain in slavery. We believe it would be profitable occasionally to convene them, in order to afford suitable opportunities to impress their minds with these truths.

As much good may be expected to result from the establishment of a fund, to be at the disposal of the Convention, we hope the laudable example set by some of the societies, in their donations for that purpose, will be followed by wealthy individuals, and by other societies who are in a capacity to afford it.

A person of established literary reputation has been engaged to write a history of the rise, progress, and present state of slavery in the United States; and some advancement has been made in the work—As a great variety of information on this subject will be necessary, to enable the author to compose a correct and ample history, you are requested to collect and forward, without delay all such essays and facts, relative to the design, as may be in your power.

At the same time that we invite a vigilant and constant attention, in the friends of the blacks, to prevent as far as their power extends, the infraction of the laws of the country in favour of emancipation, we confidently trust that due care will be observed to select men to the several offices of the societies, who have their zeal tempered with prudence and knowledge; for we are sensible, that for want of sound discretion on the part of some well-meaning but over-zealous individuals, the views and conduct of the body at large, have been grossly misunderstood; the cause has suffered undeserved reproach in the minds of some of our fellow citizens, and heavy expenses have been incurred in the unfavorable termination of suits undertaken without sufficient evidence, and with too much precipitation.

Being persuaded that no favourable opportunity should be lost for impressing the public mind with the iniquity of slavery, and the varied vices and evils, which are incident to it, in all their forms and consequences, we entreat such of you as have not chosen Standing Committees, charged with the publication of extracts and fugitive pieces, on this very interesting subject, to adopt the measure. Its utility has been fully proven by experience, which is the best of wisdom. To those societies who have derived advantage from the practice, we recommend a diligent and habitual attention to the subject.

We observe, with much sensibility and regret, that the inhuman and wicked practice of kidnapping, still prevails in our country, and that several cases of it have occurred since the meeting of the last Convention. Was there no other object to claim the ardent sympathy, and the active opposition of our associated brethren, than this alone, it would of itself be sufficiently interesting and momentous to justify an union of all our powers, and a vigorous combination of all our efforts, to resist this single enormity, this cruel and savage violation of the rights of our fellow-men. We request that



you will, in your succeeding communications to the Convention, furnish accurate accounts of the several cases which may come under your notice, and that you will detail with precision, such of them as may be attended with particular circumstances of atrocity. The perpetrators should be known and exposed to public odium. Their names whenever detected, should be circulated throughout the continent, through the medium of the public prints; and no offender, who can be brought to punishment, should be suffered to escape the just penalty of his transgressions.

The discouragements which prevail among the friends and advocates of the African race, especially to the southward, have excited the anxious concern of the Convention. While we have nine hundred thousand slaves in our country—while we have the strongest evidence that new importations will take place—while the abominable practice of kidnapping exists to an alarming and most sorrowful extent—while we have reason to believe that hundreds of vessels sail annually from our shores to traffic in the blood of our fellow-men—and while we feel, acknowledge, and deplore, that the cause of emancipation has many strenuous, powerful, and unwearied opponents in every quarter of the union—Can this be the time to remit our effort? and to abandon that standard under which, with the favour and protection of Providence, so many thousands have been rescued from the yoke of bondage, and restored to the enjoyment of their natural rights? Not so brethren—Be not disheartened—Let us rather redouble our diligence to help forward the great and good work in which we have engaged; resting our hopes of ultimate success, on our honest and disinterested endeavours, and on the justice of our cause.<sup>10</sup>

*To the . . . . . Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery.*

THIS Convention has the pleasure of acknowledging the reception of addresses from the Societies of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware; and of a communciation from the Society of Rhode Island. A free interchange of sentiments between the different societies, through the medium of the Convention, we consider as a matter of primary importance. By such communications, the Convention becomes the central fountain, into which the opinions, and experience of the different societies are

<sup>10</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1804, pp. 35–39.

received, and from whence the united knowledge may be transmitted to the individual branches. We therefore recommend, to each society, a continuation of the practice, and we earnestly entreat them to comply with our request of last year, by furnishing us with "more detailed information," not only respecting the moral, literary, and legal condition of slaves, and other persons of colour, within their districts, but also with minute accounts of every attempt at kidnapping, mentioning the names of the parties concerned in the business. Such information will open to us an extensive view of slavery and its attendant evils, as they exist within the whole circle of our societies, and enable us to labour with greater certainty and more effect, for the performance of the solemn duties which are imposed on us.

We perceive, with sincere and deep regret, that some societies have not yet made much progress in the establishment of schools for the literary and moral improvement of the people of colour. We cannot withhold the expression of our anxiety on this subject. . . . We consider it a matter of high moment, involving the most interesting and affecting consequences. Shall we, by lukewarmness or neglect, give the enemies of our institutions the triumph of reproaching us with indifference. . . . With a want of that virtue . . . that inflexible spirit of perseverance, without which the tree we have nourished, and hoped to bring to maturity, may erect its barren and useless branches before us, a gloomy monument of our indolence? With what reproaches, and difficulties, and dangers, have our societies heretofore contended! with a courage and temperance, which could have been maintained only in a great and good cause; we have withstood all the rude onsets of the enemies of rational liberty, and, under the protection of a wise Providence, we have, step by step, moved forward, subduing by the eloquent voice of reason and humanity, the oppressors of the weeping Africans, until we have seen the fetters fall from thousands, and beheld those, who had been reduced to the condition of beasts of burthen, rising from the earth with the privileges and rights of men! Shall we now desert them? after teaching them that they belong to the rank of man, shall we refuse to employ our time and talents in preparing their minds for the enjoyment of those pleasures, and the practice of those virtues which belong to their species? We have hitherto been their friends; if we now desert them, to whom shall they apply for help? Their fate, as it regards

human aid, rests chiefly with us. Let us try the strength of our virtue. . . . Let us decide, by a vote in our societies, whether we will continue our parental care over them, or leave them friendless and abandoned to their own weakness and ignorance. This vote will proclaim to the world the sincerity of our views, and the integrity of our hearts. If we are weary of well-doing, we shall forsake them; but if our breasts still glow with benevolence, we shall decide, with one voice, in their favour. Before we determine the important question, it will be well for us to recollect that no good deed passes unrewarded. Every individual sacrifice, to humanity and virtue, will be placed to our credit in the records of our lives.

The Convention have been informed, by one society, that "not being able to raise funds for the payment of a tutor, they have appointed a committee, of ten members, who maintained a school during the last summer and autumn, on the First-day afternoon of each week, for the moral and literary education of people of colour," and that they propose re-commencing the business early next summer. This conduct merits and receives our approbation, and we regard it as highly worthy the attention of societies in similar circumstances. . . . We exhort them to "go and do likewise."

In the cities of New York and Philadelphia, the schools appear to be in a flourishing condition; in some of them persons of colour are employed as teachers, and where such persons, properly qualified, can be procured, the Convention believes the employment of them will be attended with peculiar advantages. . . . It will contribute to kindle a spirit of emulation in their brethren. In some places there are persons of colour whose pecuniary circumstances would allow them to give something towards the support of schools, for their own class, and we think it proper and just, that their aid should be solicited.

Several societies have informed us that benefit has arisen from their meetings with the coloured people. We therefore, recommend that each society select a committee, of suitable members, whose duty it shall be to assemble the free persons of colour, as often as they shall judge it useful, and communicate to them such advice and instruction, as they shall think necessary; and that the committee report, in writing, the result of their opinions respecting the conference, to the next succeeding meeting of their society.

The Convention of last year, recommended to each society, the appointment of a committee for the purpose of publishing extracts,

and essays, shewing the impolicy, and injustice of slavery; but we observe, with regret, this subject has not received that serious and diligent attention to which it was entitled. No abolition society can be ignorant that there are yet many thousands of persons, within the United States, who are opposed, on what they esteem grounds of justice and policy, to African liberty. Many remain under the erroneous notion, that the blacks are a class of beings not merely inferior to, but absolutely a species different from the whites, and that they are intended, by nature, only for the degradations and sufferings of slavery. There was a time when the people of all our states, and members of every religious sect, were overshadowed by the darkness of this error, and, in consequence of their erroneous opinions, practised legal violations of the rights of humanity. The pen, and the tongue of reason and truth have convinced thousands of the falsity of those opinions, and such instruments should not be permitted to rest in idleness, until truth and humanity obtain a complete and universal triumph.

We lament the continued necessity, of inviting your attention to the clandestine commerce, which, in defiance of our state and national laws, is still carried on to the coast of Africa. Information has been received that artful men, with the secrecy of midnight robbers, have contrived means of loading their vessels for Africa, and obtaining cargoes of slaves, and vending them in the West Indies, without subjecting themselves to such detection as would lead to legal punishment. Let us keep a watchful eye on all persons of this class, and endeavour to deter them from the perpetration of such cruel offences, by the only argument of which they are susceptible, the fear of the just punishment of the laws of their country.

This address will be accompanied by a number of copies of our advice to the free people of colour. We leave it to your discretion, to distribute them, together with such parts of our former advices, as you shall judge expedient.

Finally, brethren, we beseech you by the rights of humanity . . . by the pleadings of mercy . . . by the great and interesting cause which we have espoused, that you suffer nothing to discourage you in your useful labours, . . . but that you persevere in your good works of justice and benevolence, with a temperate and firm spirit until your task, by the aid of Providence, shall be accomplished.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of Proceedings of Tenth American Convention for the Abolition of Slavery, 1805, pp. 26-35.

To

WE the American Convention of Delegates for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, feeling the importance of the business which you have committed to our deliberation, deem it our duty to address you, and to communicate some of the subjects which have claimed our particular attention.

We learn that in some parts of the United States, there are yet men so lost to all honourable feelings, so deeply depraved as to violate those laws of their country which were intended to protect the rights of free persons of colour. Those who have any knowledge of the heart of man, his selfish attachments, and the firm grasp with which he seizes and holds all that he calls his own, cannot be surprized at the reluctance which individuals evince, in resigning their claims to those people of colour who are legally their slaves: but at this period when the rights of man are so well understood, in a country where the highest degree of civil liberty is enjoyed by the white citizens, it appears astonishing that the kidnapper should be permitted to carry on his depredations; that his audacious encroachments on the rights and happiness of the suffering people of colour should, for a moment, be tolerated. We hope our feelings on this subject, will not be considered as the offspring of misguided zeal. Every one in whose heart the pulse of benevolence beats, whose sentiments are not degraded beneath the dignity of man *must feel* on this occasion; he must be sensible of the deep crime which the kidnapper commits against the laws of his country, and the violent nature of his trespass on the dearest rights of humanity. The man of colour whom our country has declared *free*; around whose liberty the law has thrown its protecting arms, in defiance of the voice of that country and that law, is torn from his family by the midnight robber, and transported to the mournful regions of perpetual slavery, while his wife and his little ones are left to struggle alone, in poverty, for the bread of mere existence. This is a melancholy but a faithful picture of the miseries occasioned by the detestable kidnapper. Let us exert our best faculties for the purpose of eradicating such evils. Those societies who form the line of demarcation between the states in which slavery has been partially or totally abolished, and those in which it is unconditionally maintained, are particularly and earnestly requested to use all their vigilance for the detection of kidnappers and the suppression of those crimes. We do not mean to say that any

deficiency, in proper zeal, has been manifested by those societies, we rather wish to speak the language of encouragement.

We observe with satisfaction the continued care, of several societies, in the great task of education. We hope there is not a single member of any one of our societies who does not perceive the importance of it. To make men happy in themselves and useful to society it is not necessary that they be taught the abstruse sciences, but it is indispensibly requisite that they be qualified to form a correct estimate of those powers, and to exercise those faculties which the Great Creator of man has been pleased to intrust to their care. The Abolition Societies may be regarded as the paternal protectors and friends of the people of colour. They have undertaken that task, and it is their duty to persevere in their labours, to hold out to the end in their good work. Although liberty be a blessing, when we obtain the freedom of the slave our work is not completed. It then becomes our peculiar charge to endeavour to teach the enfranchised man how to value, and how to employ the privileges which have fallen to his lot. This noble task is rapidly progressing in some societies, and we seriously and affectionately invite others to imitate their benevolent efforts. Lancaster's plan of instruction seems admirably adapted for the communication of the rudiments of literature, we hope there are, in all our societies, some individuals whose condition of life will allow them leisure, and whose virtue will animate them to persevering efforts in the blessed task of instructing the forlorn, and in some places, we may say almost friendless people of colour. Let them be taught to read and they will be introduced to a knowledge of the scriptures, those sacred repositories of moral and divine truth; let them be taught the elementary branches of arithmetic which will prepare them for the common concerns of life.

We rejoice with you that our national Government has had the wisdom and humanity, to embrace the first constitutional opportunity afforded, to pass a law which entirely prohibits our citizens from foreign traffic in human flesh. We hope our hearts are not without sentiments of sincere gratitude to the great disposer of events for that signal blessing. But we have to sympathize with nearly a million of human beings who are subject to the bonds of slavery within the United States, we have yet to mourn over this dishonour of our country. The progress of truth, or correct opinion of right has accomplished great ends, but much remains to be done.

Domestic slavery is a national crime ; a crime which is calculated to excite in the man of upright sentiments, serious and awful apprehensions of the final consequences of its continuance. It is our duty to employ the pen and the press for the dissemination of such arguments as shall convince our countrymen of the injustice and impolicy of such slavery. The man whose mind is clouded by prejudice, while his heart is hardened by selfish considerations, must have truth frequently repeated, and presented under various aspects, before his errors can be corrected, his prejudices subdued, and the noble feelings of philanthropy excited in his breast. This is a constant, an arduous, but not a hopeless duty. We therefore recommend the frequent publication of extracts from celebrated works, or original essays, tending to establish the justice and policy of gradual and general emancipation.

One society has informed us that a committee of its members held a satisfactory conference with the blacks and other people of colour. We think such conferences, under the direction of discreet men, may have a beneficial influence on the minds of the blacks, we again recommend the subject to your attention. In such meetings the advice of former Conventions may be renewed, and, we think, the necessity of legal marriages, honesty in their dealings, and the importance of religious instruction should be impressively urged upon them.

We learn that Thomas Clarkson's history of the abolition of the slave trade, which has been reprinted in Philadelphia, is now published for the emolument of its author. When we consider the value of this work to the cause of emancipation, the indefatigable zeal of that powerful and benevolent advocate for the rights of the Africans, and his great expense in the performance of his labours, we think ourselves bound in duty, to contribute our aid for the general circulation of his interesting history. We therefore earnestly recommend that work to your patronage, and we hope you will cheerfully employ such means, as you may think effectual for promoting its sale.<sup>12</sup>

*To*

*Society for promoting abolition.*

IN discharging the customary duty of addressing you, we have great satisfaction in stating, that the business of the Convention has been conducted, throughout, with the utmost cordiality.

<sup>12</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of the Twelfth American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery and improving the condition of the African Race Assembled at Philadelphia, 1809, pp. 26-31.

We cannot, however, forbear the expression of our sincere regret, that so few societies have been represented in this Convention. When we contemplate the interesting magnitude of the cause in which we have unitedly and voluntarily embarked—when we consider the solid and obvious advantages, which have hitherto been derived, to the friends of humanity, from a free and personal interchange of opinion and from unison of action, we confidently trust that trifling impediments will not be suffered to interpose in the fulfilment of our duty. We therefore, in that freedom which becomes the advocates of truth and justice, do most earnestly and affectionately recommend a more zealous attention to this important point, in order that the succeeding Convention may be more fully attended. Much has been accomplished, but, when we remember that it has been officially announced by the late census that nearly twelve hundred thousand of our fellow beings remain in a state of abject bondage in our deluded country, it surely will not, cannot be denied, that much, very much, remains yet to be done. You have put your hands to the plough—look not back till ye shall have accomplished the end. You have commenced the wrestling, cease not your hold till ye shall have obtained the prize.

While against the oppressor, we plead the cause of the oppressed—While we invite the unhappy slave to a patient and Christian submission to his condition—and urge on his legalized master a humane exercise of his power—While we feel ourselves bound, by all honourable and lawful means, to protect those whom the laws have enfranchised, from being again dragged into slavery—let us not forget how much depends on the careful instruction of all who are free. Without this our labour will be but very partially accomplished. This great object, so important to ourselves, as members of those who are the subjects of our care; and the Convention have learned, with heart-felt satisfaction, that it is proposed, by the people of colour in New York, to raise a fund among themselves, for the instruction of their orphan children. This circumstance, while it proves an honourable testimony to the persevering zeal of the New-York Manumission Society, reflects great credit on the blacks themselves; and we hope the example will not be without beneficial effects elsewhere. Could such of these people as have it in their power, be persuaded to apply a part of their surplus earnings to the establishment of similar funds, instead, as is unhappily the case in too many instances, of spending their money



in courses which prove injurious to their health and morals, not only their race, but the community at large, would from such meritorious efforts speedily reap the most unequivocal advantages.

It appears that, in defiance of the laws already provided to interdict the inhuman practice, and notwithstanding the enormity of the offence in itself, men are yet found, so lost to justice and the tender feeling of humanity, as to be guilty of carrying free blacks from some of the states, and selling them as slaves in others. We, therefore, recommend renewed vigilance to detect and prosecute these hardened transgressors—and that, whenever the laws are found to be defective, or insufficient to the correction of the evil, application be made, to the constituted authorities, for such amendments, and alterations as may be necessary and effectual; that our country may be purged of this most grievous iniquity.

The Pennsylvania Society accompanied their address to the Convention with some very interesting documents, which were transmitted to them by the African Institution in London, part of which it is proposed to publish in the form of an appendix to our printed minutes, in order that the information which it contains may be more generally diffused. The Convention have not, at this time, deemed it necessary or expedient, to take any further order on this subject. Were the laws of the general government, in relation to the slave trade, duly and faithfully executed, it is believed they would put an end to this inhuman traffic, which, to the disgrace of some of our citizens, it is but too evident they have been carrying on under the protection and cover of foreign flags. We invite you to a careful perusal of these documents. They contain the evidence of a mass of iniquity, the development of which cannot but excite the indignation of every feeling mind.

You will perceive, by the minutes of our proceedings, that the friends of humanity have gained an accession to their cause in the establishment of an Abolition Society in Kentucky. We trust their labours will be blessed with success, and that this dawn of light will burst into a more perfect day on our brethren of the southern states, casting its cheering and benign influence alike on all; that the ensanguined lash of the task master, and the cries of the slave, may no longer appal the ear and sicken the heart, in this boasted land of mercy and equal rights.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1812, pp. 25–28.

The Committee appointed to draft an address to the several Abolition, Manumission, &c. Societies in the United States—reported an essay, which was read, considered by paragraphs, and adopted, as follows:—

*To the various Societies instituted to promote the Abolition of Slavery in the United States, or to protect the rights and improve the condition of the People of Color.*

The American Convention of delegates from Societies, associated in various parts of our country, to promote the abolition of slavery and improve the condition of the African race, convened in Philadelphia, having harmoniously transacted its important concerns, address you at this time with increased interest for the success of the cause they have espoused; firmly relying on the Divine Being for a blessing on their feeble efforts to promote the cause of justice and mercy.

The communications forwarded to the Convention at this time, fully evince that the cause of emancipation continues to advance, and that even in the strongholds of slavery the friends of the oppressed slave are fast increasing in numbers. Our fellow citizens of the south and west are becoming more and more awakened to a sense of the evil, injustice, and impolicy of slavery; and we firmly trust that those who have engaged in the benevolent work of “restoring liberty to the captive, and to let the oppressed go free,” will not look back with discouragement at the long period this cruelty has prevailed, but continue to press forward with increased energy to the goal they have set before them, the complete and final abolition of slavery within the United States. To promote this desirable object we know of no measures more efficient than the formation of anti-slavery associations, particularly in situations where the evils of slavery prevail; for experience has fully proved that a combination of effort has often effected that which individual exertion has attempted in vain. The dissemination of useful works and tracts on the subject of slavery, cannot but have a powerful effect in enlightening the public mind on this awfully interesting subject. The Convention would particularly recommend the following works to your special attention—viz: Clarkson’s Abolition of the Slave Trade, abridged by Evan Lewis; Clarkson’s Thoughts on Slavery; Laws of the State of Pennsylvania, passed 1780; Tract on Slavery, published by the Tract Association of Friends in Phila-

delphia; Hodgson's Letter to J. B. Say, on the comparative productiveness of Free and Slave Labor; and a work now preparing for publication in this city, entitled, *A Sketch of the Laws in relation to Slavery in the United States*, by George M. Stroud. They also recommend that each Anti-Slavery Society subscribe, and promote subscriptions among their members and others, for the *Genius of Universal Emancipation*, edited by Benjamin Lundy, of Baltimore; and to the *African Observer*, a periodical work published in Philadelphia, by Enoch Lewis; and the *Freedom's Journal*, a weekly paper published at New York, by John B. Russwurm, a person of color. All these works we believe are well conducted, and will be powerful aids to the cause of liberty and justice.

As an incipient step to the abolition of slavery, we earnestly recommend that immediate application be made to the Legislature of states where slavery exists, to prohibit the sale of slaves out of the state. The traffic which is thus carried on from state to state, is fruitful of evil consequences, not only depraving the minds of those engaged in it, but producing the most cruel separations of near connexions, and depriving its victims of almost every incentive to conjugal fidelity or correctness of conduct. Perhaps next in importance in meliorating the condition of the slaves, is the adoption of regulations for their religious instruction, and the education of their children.

The condition of the free people of color in the United States has claimed our attention, and we earnestly recommend to the several societies, not only to use their endeavors to protect them in their just rights, but to use every means in their power to elevate them in the scale of society, by affording them and their children the means of literary instruction. And as the first day of the week is too frequently spent by them in dissipation, we would suggest the formation of associations wherever practicable, for the establishment of first day or Sunday schools for their benefit, as well as schools on the other days of the week. The degraded condition of this class of men ought to call forth our regret and sympathy; being precluded from pursuing the lucrative employments of life, it is much to be desired that more of them than have heretofore been permitted may be instructed in handicraft trades, and employed in manufactures.

You will observe, by our minutes, that the Convention has again addressed Congress, on the important subject of the abolition of

slavery in the District of Columbia, and the restriction of the further introduction of slaves into the Territory of Florida; and we hope our application will be supported by addresses from other bodies of our constituents. The Convention believes that if the advocates of freedom persevere in endeavoring to enlighten the public mind on this all important subject, that the time is not far distant when a triumph will be obtained over the strong prejudice and delusion which has so long continued, and the cause of justice and humanity will finally prevail.

The Convention fervently desires that all who have put their hands to this great work may really deserve the epithet of "Saints," which in irony has been reproachfully cast upon them; and by their energy, prudence, and moderation, convince their opponents they have been mistaken in their characters and conduct. And we confidently hope that the blessing of that Almighty Being, who equally regards the bond and the free, will crown your righteous labor with success.<sup>14</sup>

*To the various Anti-Slavery Societies in the United States.*

The American Convention, for promoting the abolition of slavery, and improving the condition of the African race, feeling desirous to encourage every measure that may have a tendency to aid this deeply injured people, and to relieve our country from the many evils inseparably connected with the system of individual oppression, take the liberty to address you upon the present occasion. And in the performance of this task, we are particularly solicitous to draw your attention to the subject of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia—a subject which we view as highly important, especially at the present moment, and deserving your most serious consideration.

When we reflect that the government of this District emanates from the Congress of the United States—that the power to regulate its political and municipal concerns is solely vested in that body—that the people of every State must share the honor or opprobrium attending the course of conduct pursued by the authorities in the administration of its local government—and that the whole Union must be measurably responsible for the consequence resulting therefrom—when we take this view of the subject, we ought not for a

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1827, pp. 20–22.

moment to hesitate in appealing to the friends of humanity in every section of the country, and urging them to use all lawful and just means, within their reach, to limit, and finally to eradicate the demoralizing and corrupting system of slavery, which is yet upheld and tolerated there.

We will not enter into a minute detail of the many advantages that would result to the nation, either morally or politically, from the abolition of slavery, in the District aforesaid.—But we feel it an imperious duty to state, that in our opinion it would be attended with the most salutary effects on other portions of the Union, the *influence* of which would be incalculable. Under the present regulations, that distinguished spot on which is erected the sacred Fane of republican Freedom, is not only polluted by the galling shackle and the iron rod of oppression, but is absolutely converted into a great depository for the purchase and sale of human beings. The demoralizing effect which this must produce on the minds of many who become familiarized with it, and the odium which it attaches to us, in the estimation of enlightened foreigners, many of whom are constant witnesses thereof, must inevitably sap the foundation of our free institutions, and degrade our national character in the eyes of the world. This, we conceive, (to say nothing of the injustice of slavery and its concomitants,) should be a sufficient incentive to action—a sufficient inducement to labor in the holy cause of emancipation.

We are aware that it has been asserted, even on the floor of Congress, that we should wait until the people of that District themselves demand the abolition of the system of slavery. This doctrine we conceive to be fallacious. *The people there are not exclusively responsible for the national disgrace and criminality attending it.* The United States government, and of course, the people in every section of the Union, must bear the odium and meet the consequences:—and if so, it follows, that they have a perfect right to avert the same, by such just and legal means as their wisdom may point out, and their judgment select. But a portion of the people of that District *are* now demanding the eradication of the evil in question. Societies for the abolition of slavery have been organized among them; and they have protested against the continuance of the cruel and disgraceful practice. Let, then, the voice of their brethren elsewhere, be heard in unison with theirs. Let a strong appeal be made to the justice of the nation, that the constituted

authorities may be induced to take up the subject, and bestow upon it that care which its importance imperiously requires.

To facilitate the accomplishment of this purpose, we would advise and recommend, that petitions and memorials be circulated by all the anti-slavery societies in each of the States and territories, for the signature of the citizens at large, and that they be forwarded to Congress by the Representatives, with instructions to lay them before that body, at an early day.

The Committee appointed to consider on and report what measures, &c. made the following report.

*To the American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.*

The Committee appointed "to consider of and report what measures are necessary to be taken to promote the Abolition of the Domestic Slave Trade, and to protect free persons of color from being kidnapped, and whether any regulations might be adopted to prevent their being carried off in steam boats, stages, and coasting vessels," Report, that although in their opinion the intimate connexion existing between the Domestic Slave Trade and the system of slavery generally, precludes the expectation of applying a very efficient check to the one, except by a reduction of the other, yet they indulge the hope that the united influence of the several Abolition and Anti-Slavery Societies throughout the Union, directed to memorializing Congress, might procure some wholesome restraint upon a traffick fraught with such aggravated evil, and productive of such complicated misery.

In relation to the other subject submitted to them, viz. "the protection of free persons of color against kidnappers," the Committee are of opinion that the existing laws appear to be amply sufficient, if properly executed. They have, therefore, no other measures to recommend than the less obtrusive, but persevering exertions, of the several associations now formed, and which may be hereafter instituted, in the different sections of our country.

On behalf of the Committee,

DAVID SCHOLFIELD, *Chairman*.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1827, pp. 22-25.

*To the Abolition, Manumission, and Anti-Slavery Societies in the United States of America.*

FELLOW LABORERS.—In reviewing the labors of the several Anti-Slavery Societies in the United States, there is much to cheer and gratify us. In looking over the different sections of our extended country, we find the cause of truth and humanity has slowly, but regularly advanced, in the minds of our fellow citizens generally. And we think nothing remains but perseverance in presenting the subject of slavery in its native deformity and its hideous aspect, to convince its advocates of their error, and to overcome all the opposition which can be arrayed against us. We are satisfied that to the perseverance of its advocates alone, we are indebted in a considerable degree for the change of opinion in the Northern, Middle, and some of the Western States: and we sincerely hope that a similar change will be ultimately made in the southern sections of our country. Let us never relax in our exertions to promote the emancipation, and meliorate the condition of slaves, till every human being in these United States shall equally enjoy, all the blessings of our free Institutions. How can we feel apathy or indifference while we can almost see from the windows of the room in which we are now deliberating, a receptacle for slaves, in which they are thrust, manacled and bound, all ready to ship by their avaricious owner in the first vessel whose master or owners are as hard hearted and unprincipled as himself! Yes! A dungeon, the horrors of which has called forth deep emotions of regret from all who are permitted to see the misery and wretchedness of its inmates, and particularly the tears and great agitation of a benevolent aged stranger, who, in visiting this country, which has always professed “That all men are by nature, and of right ought to be free,” was surprised and shocked to find in the precincts of one of the most professedly enlightened and patriotic cities in the Union, a store-house of human flesh!

Slavery in whatever point of light considered, is a revolting subject, repugnant to the best feelings of our nature, as inconsistent with the rights and happiness of man. We therefore, urge the respective Societies to renewed exertions, in behalf of our colored population, and to petition Congress to abolish Slavery in the District of Columbia, and also to prevent its further extension in the territories of the United States.

Deeply injured as they have been by the whites, the colored

people certainly claim from us some degree of retributive justice; we would, therefore, at this time particularly and earnestly recommend to the renewed attention of all the Abolition, Manumission and Anti-Slavery Societies in this country, the all-important subject of giving the colored children literary instruction, and placing them as apprentices to useful trades.

For, unquestionably, the most efficient means of promoting the moral improvement of this degraded portion of the human family is the institution of schools. And it must be obvious to every thinking mind, that a portion of education will be absolutely necessary to prepare the slave for the enjoyment of freedom; and such has been the happy influence of it on the scholars in the New York African Free School, that the Trustees in that city, state, that no scholar who has been regularly educated in their school, has ever been convicted of crime in any of their courts of justice. We have no doubt that if similar means were used in other places, the like happy result would be obtained. And it is equally certain, that facts like these do more to obliterate idle prejudice than all abstract reasoning on the subject.

The Convention have been highly pleased at this time by the exhibition of some handsome specimens of the skill and talent of some of the boys in the African school under the charge of *Charles C. Andrews*, in New York; creditable alike to the Teacher and the scholar. For a more particular description of these articles, we refer to page 20 of the minutes of this Convention.

We again call your attention to the following extract from our Address last year, particularly applicable to the present subject.

“As an incipient step to the Abolition of Slavery, we earnestly recommend, that immediate application be made to the Legislatures of States where Slavery exists, to prohibit the sale of slaves out of the state. The traffic which is thus carried on from state to state, is fruitful of evil consequences, not only depraving the minds of those engaged in it, but producing the most cruel separation of near connexions, and depriving its victims of almost every incentive to conjugal fidelity or correctness of conduct. Perhaps next in importance in meliorating the condition of slaves, is the adoption of regulations for their religious instruction, and the education of their children.”

“And while the members of the several Societies are laboring in the good work of universal emancipation, the Convention would



particularly urge them to use all suitable endeavours, mildly yet earnestly, to prevail upon slave holders to consider the injustice and impolicy of tolerating Slavery; and prevail, if possible, upon such individuals, to fall into some plan for its gradual and entire abolition in our otherwise free and favoured country.”

We conclude with exhorting all those who are engaged with us in this important cause, to persevere, with the hope and confidence, that although our progress may be apparently slow, and our prospects sometimes appear discouraging, conformably to the dispensations of a Gracious Providence, truth and justice must, and will ultimately prevail.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

EDMUND HAVILAND, *Chairman*.<sup>16</sup>

*To the Manumission, Anti-Slavery Societies, &c, throughout the United States.*

FELLOW CITIZENS,—The American Convention for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c. now sitting at Washington, in the District of Columbia, having seriously taken into consideration the state of slavery in the said district, and in the United States generally, and viewed what furtherance the cause of freedom has received for some time past, are decidedly of opinion, that increasing efforts are at this time, emphatically called for, on the part of those who really think that “all men are created free and equal.”

Memorial after memorial has been presented to Congress, but as yet they have produced but little visible effect. Small progress has been made towards abolishing slavery at the seat of our National Government. It has been a subject of much reflection what measures would be most likely to accomplish the grand object of our labours; and we would suggest whether greater success would not be likely to crown our efforts, by more widely disseminating a knowledge of the objects and principles of the different Anti-Slavery Societies throughout the Union. The subject has been referred at this session of our Acting Committee, but our funds are too limited to act as extensively as the great importance of the object requires. It is believed that a very large portion of the citizens of the United States are favorable to the emancipation of the people of colour, if it could be done upon legitimate prin-

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1828, pp. 28-30.

ciples, without infringing upon the rights of individuals or endangering the safety of the community; and if the dissemination of our principles was more generally attended to, co-adjuting societies would doubtless increase, and this Convention eventually become a body so numerous and respectable, that the National Government would not withhold its attention.

The proper education of the African race should form a prominent feature in all our efforts. It is with much gratification we are enabled to state that the address from New York, mentions a continued advancement in the literary improvement of the coloured children, and that from Philadelphia holds out the prospect of the establishment of a school for teaching them the higher branches of an English education and thus enabling them to act as teachers of their own isolated race. To break up the fallow ground, to sow the seed, and rear the tender plants of virtue in this degraded people, should be the wish of every heart and the effort of every hand. Let us establish schools, instruct the children, and show to the world that the mind of the African is not a soil where genius sickens and every virtue dies.

When we reflect that man is a being whose own interest generally forms the alpha and omega, beginning and end of life, a centre around which every passion and affection of his heart revolves, a boundary beyond which he seldom ventures, we are rather encouraged at the progress of our cause, than deterred by the magnitude of the work to be yet accomplished. Have not thousands been liberated, and the condition of tens of thousands improved? We believe there is a secret fire enkindled in the public bosom which will never be extinguished, until liberty be given to the captive and freedom to the oppressed. But this glorious principle needs to be encouraged and kept alive by the increasing efforts of its friends, to show to the world that they themselves are not weary of well-doing. Prejudices imbibed in youth and strengthened by age are to be broken down, and many an objection to be overcome.

In conclusion we would remark that although much censure has been cast upon us, we are renewedly convinced of the goodness and the justice of our cause. Let us exhort you to a patient continuance in your labours; and "the bread cast upon the waters, shall be found after many days."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the Proceedings of a Convention of Delegates from the Abolition Societies, 1829, pp. 19-21.